



PRESS RELEASE
*Office of the United States Attorney
Middle District of Florida*

PAUL I. PEREZ
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

400 North Tampa Street
Suite 3200
Tampa, Florida 33602
813/274-6000
813/274-6300 (Fax)

300 North Hogan Street
Suite 700
Jacksonville, Florida 32202
904/301-6300
904/301-6310 (Fax)

501 West Church Street
Suite 300
Orlando, Florida 32805
407/648-7500
407/648-7643 (Fax)

2110 First Street
Suite 3-137
Fort Myers, Florida 33901
239/461-2200
239/461-2219 (Fax)

Contact: Steve Cole ♦ Public Affairs Specialist ♦ 813/274-6352

For Immediate Release

March 9, 2005

Miami Man Sentenced for Illegally Smuggling Protected Reptiles

Orlando, Florida - U.S. District Judge Anne Conway today sentenced Michael Barrera, 21, of Miami, to 24 months' imprisonment for conspiracy to smuggle protected wildlife into the United States. Barrera entered a guilty plea to the charge on December 22, 2004.

According to the plea agreement, Barrera and another co-conspirator, who lived outside of the United States, agreed to send reptiles to one another between the United States and Singapore. The reptiles which were sent included turtles, tortoises, lizards, and snakes. The co-conspirator shipped reptiles by commercial carrier to Barrera from Singapore, and Barrera shipped reptiles by commercial carrier and the U.S. Postal Service to his co-conspirator in Singapore. Neither Barrera nor his co-conspirator obtained the necessary permits for the international shipment of the animals, nor did they declare the animals upon their export or import. Shipping documents were prepared which omitted any reference to the fact that wildlife was contained in the shipments. Barrera and his co-

conspirator intentionally mislabeled the shipments as containing things such as books and magazines. Barrera admitted to importing or exporting more than 500 animals covered by these laws with a market value between \$200,000 and \$400,000.

The animals shipped and received by Barrera are protected by international treaty and/or U.S. law. These laws protect rare animals from overexploitation and commercialization on a worldwide basis. In addition, U.S. law requires that packages containing animals be properly labeled and declared for inspection by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service inspectors. Importation of certain animals can create a significant risk of disease transmission potentially harmful to humans such as salmonella. Additionally, shipment of live venomous reptiles pose a significant risk to those who handle the shipments without knowledge of the contents.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Carolyn J. Adams.